



DATE: August 10, 2020

TO: Businesses and Employers in Granville and Vance counties

FROM: Lisa Macon Harrison, MPH, Health Director, and Shauna Guthrie, MD, MPH, Medical Director

SUBJECT: Guidance re: Employee Quarantine and Isolation for COVID-19

Our staff at the health department continue to test for COVID-19, contact trace, and watch the trends in the data daily. When an individual displays symptoms of COVID-19 or tests positive for the virus (regardless of whether they have symptoms), they are placed under isolation. Persons with COVID-19 who have symptoms and were directed to care for themselves at home may discontinue isolation under the following conditions:

- At least **24 hours** have passed since recovery defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); and,
- At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

If the individual tested positive for COVID-19 but has not had any symptoms, they should remain under isolation until at least 10 days have passed since the date of their first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test assuming they have not subsequently developed symptoms since their positive test. If they develop symptoms, then the symptom-based strategy should be used.

For an individual who had **close contact, defined as less than 6 feet for 15 minutes or more, with a person who has symptoms of COVID-19 or with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19**, it is recommended they quarantine in their home until 14 days after the last exposure and self-monitor for symptoms. Our contact tracing efforts are intended to educate and advise people about when they have been a contact to a positive case, and then to ask them to quarantine to reduce the spread of COVID-19. People who are not yet showing symptoms can, in some cases, still spread the virus.

Employers should implement the recommendations in the [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019](#) to help prevent and slow the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace. We have summarized some of the key guidance for businesses below.

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If an employee within your business tests positive for COVID-19, it is important to determine which employees may have been exposed to the virus (again, someone who was within less than 6 feet for 15 minutes or more with a positive COVID-19 patient) and take additional precautions:

- Inform employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- **Most workplaces should follow the [Public Health Recommendations for Community-Related Exposure](#) and instruct potentially exposed employees to stay home for 14 days, telework if possible, and self-monitor for symptoms.**

Therefore, in order to maintain healthy business operations, businesses should implement flexible sick leave and supportive policies and practices. Accordingly, the [CDC recommends](#) that all businesses:

- Ensure that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of and understand these policies.
- Maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member or take care of children due to school and childcare closures. Additional flexibilities might include giving advances on future sick leave and allowing employees to donate sick leave to each other.
- Employers that do not currently offer sick leave to some or all of their employees should consider drafting non-punitive “emergency sick leave” policies.
- **Employers should not require a COVID-19 test result or a healthcare provider’s note for employees who are sick to validate their illness, qualify for sick leave, or to return to work.**
 - Under the American’s with Disabilities Act, employers are permitted to require a doctor’s note from your employee to verify that they are healthy and able to return to work. However, as a practical matter, be aware that healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely manner. Most people with COVID-19 have mild illness and can recover at home without medical care and can follow CDC recommendations to determine when to discontinue home isolation and return to work.
- Review human resources policies to make sure that your policies and practices are consistent with public health recommendations and with existing state and federal workplace laws (for more information on employer responsibilities, visit the [Department of Labor’s](#) and the [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission’s](#) websites).

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We understand some critical infrastructure industries such as healthcare, critical manufacturing, law enforcement, and others have concerns about contacts to a positive case staying out of work for 14 days. Critical infrastructure workplaces should follow the guidance on [Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure Workers Who May Have Had Exposure to a Person with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19](#) to ensure continuity of operations. Employers in critical infrastructure have an obligation to manage potentially exposed workers' return to work in ways that best protect the health of those workers, their co-workers, and the general public. **When we speak with contacts, we direct them to check with their place of work and follow work guidelines if they are an essential worker.** Additional information about identifying critical infrastructure during COVID-19 can be found on the [DHS CISA website](#) or the CDC's specific [First Responder Guidance page](#).

The CDC provides guidance for [mitigating staff shortages](#) and [guidance for returning to work](#). Additional information and guidance tailored to businesses and employers is available through [OSHA](#), [CDC](#), and [NC Department of Health and Human Services](#).

Thank you for your support in understanding the importance of our relaying the community-related guidance and everyone should continue to practice safe distancing, wear a face covering, and wash hands frequently. Please let us know if there are additional ways the health department can support you to minimize the spread of COVID-19 in our communities. We are in this together.

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